

IN THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (cancelled)

2(Currently amended). An isolated polynucleotide encoding ~~the~~ a hyperthermostable protease comprising the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 or functional equivalent thereof according to claim 1.

3(Original). The polynucleotide according to claim 2, which comprises the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:2.

4(Currently amended). ~~The~~ An isolated polynucleotide encoding a hyperthermostable protease gene according to claim 2, which polynucleotide hybridizes to ~~the polynucleotide comprising~~ the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:2, wherein hybridization is carried out by incubating in 6XSSC at 50°C and washing with 2XSSC at 37°C.

5(Original). A method for preparing a hyperthermostable protease, comprising culturing a transformant containing the polynucleotide of claim 2, and harvesting a hyperthermostable protease from the culture.

Claim 6 (Cancelled)

7(Currently amended). An isolated polynucleotide encoding ~~the~~ a hyperthermostable protease or a functional

~~equivalent thereof according to claim 6~~ comprising the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:6.

8(Original). The polynucleotide according to claim 7, which comprises the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:6.

9(Currently amended). ~~The~~An isolated polynucleotide encoding a hyperthermostable protease ~~according to claim 7,~~ which polynucleotide hybridizes to ~~the polynucleotide comprising the~~ nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:6, wherein hybridization is carried out by incubating in 6XSSC at 50°C and washing with 2XSSC at 37°C.

10(Original). A method for preparing a hyperthermostable protease, comprising culturing a transformant containing the polynucleotide of claim 7, and harvesting a hyperthermostable protease ~~gene~~ from the culture.

11(New). A method for preparing a hyperthermostable protease, comprising culturing a transformant containing the polynucleotide of claim 4, and harvesting a hyperthermostable protease from the culture.

12(New). A method for preparing a hyperthermostable protease, comprising culturing a transformant containing the polynucleotide of claim 9, and harvesting a hyperthermostable protease ~~gene~~ from the culture.

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IN THE SEQUENCE LISTING

Please substitute the attached Sequence Listing section for the last filed Sequence Listing.